

risk to their safety every day. National Peace Officers Memorial Day provides the people of the United States, in their communities, in their state capitals, and in the Nation's Capital, with the opportunity to honor and reflect on the extraordinary service and sacrifice given year after year by the women and men who serve in police forces, as peace officers and in all branches of law enforcement.

This week we honor those who lost their lives in the line of duty, and their families. In 2010, 153 law enforcement officers died while serving in the line of duty. Their bravery and sacrifice should not be forgotten. Since the first recorded police death in 1792, there have been more than 19,000 law enforcement officers who have died in the line of duty.

Late last week, the Senate passed a resolution I introduced to recognize those officers who lost their lives last year. I thank Senator GRASSLEY for joining me in sponsoring that resolution. I am glad the Senate came together unanimously to show its strong support and appreciation of America's law enforcement officers.

Keeping our communities safe is vitally important work and will always be dangerous, but we must work to keep those who protect us as safe as possible. The officers who lost their lives in 2010 are a stark reminder that we must not let up in our support of those who work day in and day out in the service of all of us and our communities.

I was proud to champion bipartisan legislation first passed more than a decade ago which has authorized Federal funding to assist in the purchase of lifesaving bulletproof vests for law enforcement officers. I have worked hard to ensure that legislation is funded each year. From 1999 through 2009, the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program has helped provide more than 800,000 vests. Just last year, the program paid for 95 new vests across Vermont. These vests have saved the lives of police officers across America.

In these tough economic times, when towns and cities have had to tighten their belts and make tough decisions about their budgets, these grants are even more important to protect law enforcement officers. Congress must continue to support this initiative to increase the safety of those in the line of duty.

Congress must also continue to support Federal assistance to state and local law enforcement. Consistent support for key Federal support initiatives like the COPS program, the Byrne/JAG program, and rural law enforcement grants are an important reason why crime rates have continued to decline even as the economy struggled and State budgets tightened. We were able to secure funding in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and renewed commitments in the appropriations process, which allowed police departments throughout the country to

hire and maintain officers, buy needed equipment, and provide training.

In the current budget environment, everyone has had to make sacrifices. Even the President, who has been a strong supporter of law enforcement, has called for modest cuts in Federal assistance to State and local law enforcement. What we cannot afford are the draconian cuts in law enforcement assistance that others are proposing. We owe it to our law enforcement professionals and to our communities to continue our much-needed support.

HIRING HEROES ACT OF 2011

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, President George Washington once said "The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation."

President Washington's words are a serious reminder of our obligation to all of the brave men and women serving our country overseas. We have a solemn obligation to our veterans when they return home. And the unemployment numbers among veterans make it clear that we have a long way to go.

The unemployment rate among veterans who have served in the military since September 2001 far exceeds that of their nonveteran peers. The unemployment rate for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans hit 13.1 percent in April. This is roughly 3 percentage points higher than the previous year. The unemployment rate among Montana veterans has more than doubled since 2005. This is a serious problem. We should be greeting our veterans with quality health care and our eternal gratitude, not an unemployment check.

Yesterday, I was proud to stand with my friends and colleagues, Senator PATTY MURRAY and Senator JON TESTER, as we introduced the Hiring Heroes Act of 2011. The bill will take a number of important steps to help our brave veterans find work when they come home from war.

If a soldier serves as a truck driver or a medic in the military, there shouldn't be excessive red tape to become a truck driver or serve in a hospital as a civilian. That is why this bill requires the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and the Secretary of Labor to study how skills learned in the military can be more effectively translated to meet the qualifications required for civilian jobs back home. The legislation would also initiate a new program aimed at eliminating the barriers between military training and civilian licensure or credentialing.

The Hiring Heroes Act would require the Department of Labor to reach out to and assist recently discharged veterans receiving disability payments. The bill would also extend the VA's authority to provide rehabilitation and

job training for severely wounded troops. Without this extension, only veterans separated from the military could take advantage of these critical employment services. Helping veterans requires close cooperation between the VA and veterans service organizations. That is why the legislation would authorize \$4.5 million in grants for non-profit organizations that help veterans find work.

The Hiring Heroes Act of 2011 complements the legislation that Senators TESTER, GRASSLEY, Senator BURR and I introduced earlier this year: the Veteran Employment Transition Act of 2011. This legislation will reward employers that hire veterans who have recently completed their service in the military with up to a \$2,400 tax credit under the work opportunity tax credit. I am proud that 17 of my colleagues in the Senate—Republicans and Democrats—have cosponsored this legislation. The House companion has 54 cosponsors.

The bill also cuts the redtape that generally exists under the work opportunity tax credit. Rather than having to go through the tax credit's current certification process, qualified servicemen and women who have been recently discharged will only need show their discharge documentation that was provided by the Department of Defense. This includes those men and women who were activated by their states as members of the National Guard.

Enacting this legislation would just be the first step. The tax credit will not work unless veterans and small businesses across the country know about it. That is why I am working with the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and other Veteran Service Organizations to help get the word out about this tax credit once we pass the legislation.

Briefly, I thank my Defenders of Freedom Fellows, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans and Montana-Natives Charlie Cromwell and Troy Carter. As legislative fellows in my office, Charlie and Troy worked hard to draft and advance this bill. I created the Defenders of Freedom Fellowship so that Montana veterans could work on legislation that helps their fellow veterans. They would be proud of this legislation.

I encourage all interested Montana veterans to contact my office for more information. It will take this kind of teamwork to provide the support our veterans need when they come home from war. It is an honor to introduce this legislation and I look forward to its quick passage this legislative session.

SBIR/STTR

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I wish to express my disappointment with this body's failure to move forward with the Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer reauthorization.